

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DHAHRA 00906 011242Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-03 H-01
DHA-02 MEE0-01 DIWY-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 EUR-12
HEW-04 PPT-01 SS-15 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06
/095 W

-----029225 011429Z /44

R 011130Z AUG 77
FM AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USLO RIYADH
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5596

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, CASC, SA
SUBJECT: WORKING WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR -- THE
CONFRONTATION CONTINUES

REF: (A) DHAHRAN 0851, (B) JIDDA 5266

1. SUMMARY SAG MININT OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO PUSH TWO AMERICAN COMPANIES HARD TO REGULARIZE THE STATUS OF THEIR FOREIGN FEMALE EMPLOYEES. THEY HAVE BEEN ASKED TO PRESENT THE PASSPORTS OF THESE EMPLOYEES -- PRESUMEABLY AS A PRELUDE TO FINING THE COMPANY AND ORDERING THE DISMISSAL OF ITS FEMALE EMPLOYEES. POST HAS ADVISED COMPANIES TO RETURN PASSPORTS TO THE EMPLOYEES AND DIRECT THEM TO MAKE THE DECISION AS TO WHETHER THEY SHOULD SURRENDER THEM OR NOT TO SAG AUTHORITIES. POST ALSO ADVISES THAT MINLAB OFFICIALS SHOULD BE CONSULTED AT RIYADH TO SEEK WAYS OF REGULARIZING THE STATUS OF FOREIGN WOMEN WORKING FOR AMERICAN COMPANIES. END SUMMARY

2. REF A REVIEWS MOUNTING PRESSURES BY LOCAL MININT OFFICIALS
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TO HAVE EMPLOYERS OF FOREIGN WOMEN TO TERMINATE THEIR FEMALES OR OBTAIN PROPER DOCUMENTATION TO ENABLE THEM TO CONTINUE TO WORK. MESSAGE, IN PARTICULAR, REVIEWED SITUATION IN RESPECT TO TWO AMERICAN COMPANIES OPERATING HERE -- NORTHROP AND BECHTEL. AS OUTLINED BELOW, BOTH COMPANIES CONTINUE TO HAVE GREATER DIFFICULTIES AND APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SELECTED AS TEST CASES BY LOCAL MININT REP -- THE ALKHOBAR PASSPORT OFFICE -- RESPONSIBLE

FOR HANDLING THE DOCUMENTATION OF RESIDENT FOREIGNERS.

3. BECHTEL'S CASE, AS PREDICTED IN REFTTEL, WAS TAKEN UP AT THE SENIOR MININT LEVEL BY ROYAL COMMISSION FOR JUBAIL AND YENBO. ANSWER GIVEN IN REPLY IS THAT THE COMPANY IS TO DELIVER THE PASSPORTS OF ITS FEMALE EMPLOYEES TO THE ALKHOBAR PASSPORT OFFICE BY AUGUST 7. PASSPORT OFFICE, PRESUMABLY, WILL EYMINA TRAVEL DOCUMENTS TO SEE THAT THE FEMALE EMPLOYEES HAVE WORK VISAS. ONCE IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED OFFICIALLY THAT THESE EMPLOYEES ARE WORKING FOR BECHTEL ILLEGALLY, THE COMPANY ASSUMES IT WILL BE FINED AND THE FEMALE EMPLOYEES WILL BE ORDERED DISMISSED. DURING PERIOD BEFORE AUGUST 7 DEADLINE, ALKHOBAR PASSPORT OFFICE HAS RESUMED ISSUING EXIT PERMITS AND RESIDENT PERMITS ON A REGULAR BASIS.

4. POST HAS ADVISED BECHTEL THAT IN KEEPING WITH 8 FAM 241.41 IT SHOULD RETURN THOSE AMCIT PASSPORTS IT IS CURRENTLY HOLDING TO THE INDIVIDUALS TO WHOM THEY WERE ISSUED. COMPANY SHOULD THEN EXPLAIN TO THE LOCAL PASSPORT AUTHORITIES THAT BECHTEL DOES NOT HAVE THE PASSPORTS AND THAT THE AMCIT CONCERNED MUST MAKE THE DECISION TO SURRENDER HIS OR HER TRAVEL DOCUMENT TO SAG AUTHORITIES. BECHTEL WAS ADVISED TO STATE THAT IF PASSPORT OFFICE HAS ANY QUESTION REGARDING ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMPANY IN RESPGFSE TOHEPS REQUEST, THAT IT SHOULD CALL ON THE AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL, DHAHRAN, TO EXPLAIN ITS VIEWS ON THIS MATTER.

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5. POST ASSUMES THAT ACTION SUGGESTED ABOVE WILL RESULT IN STALEMATE -- PASSPORT OFFICE WILL SUSPEND ALL FURTHER PROCESSING OF BECHTEL, TRAVEL DOCUMENTS AND AMCITS WILL HOLD ON TO THEIR PASSPORTS. TO AVOID BECHTEL'S EMPLOYEES BEING LOCKED INTO THIS STALEMATE, POST ADVISED COMPANY TO HAVE URGENT DISCUSSIONS WITH ROYAL COMMISSION ON THIS MATTER AS WELL AS BRING THE CONSIDERABLE CLOUT OF BECHTEL'S PARTNER, SULEIMAN OLAYAN, TO BEAR ON THE PROBLEM. IN THIS REGARD, PROBLEM OF REGULARIZING STATUS OF ITS FEMALE EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH SENIOR-MOST MINLAB OFFICIALS IN RIYADH. CONGEN AND BECHTEL ALSO DISCUSSED COMPANY'S PLANS TO FURLOUGH ITS FEMALE LABOR FORCE UNTIL SUCH TIME AS EFFORTS OF ROYAL COMMISSION AND OLAYAN RESOLVE MATTER TO COMPANY'S FAVOR. COMPANY BELIEVES THAT ONCE WOMEN ARE REMOVED FROM COMPANY OFFICES, ALKHOBAR PASSPORT OFFICE WILL HANDLE EXIT VISA AND RESIDENCY PERMIT APPLICATIONQ AS IADID BEFORE PRESENT SITUATION AROSE.

6. NORTHROP CASE CONTINUES TO BE MORE COMPLEX, BUT LESS DIFFICULT THAN BECHTEL'S CASE. NORTHROP CONTINUES TO SEEK THE MODA'S PROTECTION IN THIS MATTER (SEE PARA

1B OF REF A) BUT SENIOR-

MOST RSAF ITMMANDER (WHO IS SUPERVISING MODA'S CONTRACT WITH NORTHROP) CLAIMS THAT HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH DEPUTY MODA MINISTER TURKI TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH HIS COUNTERPART IN MININT. IN MEANTIME, RSAF COMMANDER CALLED ON ALKHOBAR PASSPORT OFFICE DIRECTOR AND IT WAS AGREED THAT NORTHROP SHOULD TURN OVER ALL PASSPORTS OF ITS FEMALE EMPLOYEES TO PASSPORT OFFICE. NORTHROP AGREED (WITHOUT CONSULTING CONGEN) AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ARE WITH PASSPORT OFFICE ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY WILL BE RETURNED TO NORTHROP BEFORE END OF WEEK. NORTHROP HAS ASKED POST, SINCE BULK OF TRAVEL DOCUMENTS IN HANDS OF PASSPORT OFFICE ARE ISSUED TO AMCITS, TO INTERVENE ON ITS BEHALF SHOULD THEY NOT BE RETURNED PROMPTLY BY SAG AUTHORITIES AS PROMISED.

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7. AS REF B REPORTS, MININT APPEARS TO OFFER NO AVENUE LUJ RESOLVE PROBLEM OF AMCIT WOMEN WORKING IN SAUDI ARABIA WITHOUT WORK PERMITS. THE FACT THAT IT HAS, UNTIL RECENTLY, CHOSEN TO OVERLOOK THE SITUATION IS BESIDE THE POINT -- SAG REGULATIONS REGARDING WORKING WOMEN ARE CLEAR AND MININT HAS NO SAY, IN THEORFON AS TO WHETHER FOREIGN WOMEN WORK OR NOT IN THE KINGDOM. DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERIOR, IN REF B, APPEARS TO SUGGEST THIS AND SEEMS TO SUGGEST FURTHER THAT MININT INTEREST IN THIS SITUATION WILL DISSOLVE ONCE MINLAB HAS SATISFIED ITSELF REGARDING WORKING CONDITIONS IN COMPANY ARE COMPLIED WITH AND WORK PERMITS ARE ISSUED. IT APPEARS TO US, AS WE SUGGESTED IN REF A, THAT MINLAB IS THE KEY TO THIS MATTER OF WORKING WOMEN AND WE ENCOURAGE EMBASSY JIDDA/USLO RIYADH, AS IT CONTINUES TO PROBE THIS MATTER, TO DISCUSS QUESTION WITH THAT MINISTRY. LUCIUS

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